SANCTIFYING GRACE

REV. E. TOWERS

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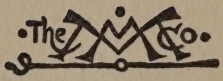
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE STATE OF GRACE	1
II.	SONS AND HEIRS	16
III.	TEMPLES OF GOD	28
IV.	THROUGH JESUS CHRIST	36
V.	SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITIES	45
VI.	GROWTH IN GRACE	56
VII.	GRACE AND MERIT	65
VIII.	LOSS AND REGAIN	76
	EPILOGUE. HOPE AND FEAR	81

SANCTIFYING GRACE

CHAPTER I

THE STATE OF GRACE

Sanctifying Grace a positive reality—Protestant error explained and refuted—Grace wholly supernatural—Grace makes us share God's nature and life.

In one of the most beautiful of the Psalms the royal singer gives expression to the wonder which filled his mind when he looked out upon the glories of God's visible creation. "O Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in the whole earth! For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens. . . . I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded." And then he marvels that a God of such magnificence and power should have any care for feeble man. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands. . . . O

Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in all the earth!" [1]

With still greater reason can we proclaim the glory and the magnificence and the condescension of the Lord our God when we consider, in the light of Catholic theology, the wonders of a soul which God has beautified by the gift of sanctifying grace. "All the glory of the king's daughter is within," [2] and it is in a soul which is in the state of grace rather than in the starry heavens or in the wonders of the human mind that we are to find the masterpiece of God's handicraft in this world of ours. The sanctifying grace with which the souls of God's servants are endowed is far grander, far more glorious than anything which we can behold in the heavens above us or on the earth at our feet. This is a truth which we have often heard—so often, perhaps, that it has become a commonplace which we accept without appreciating its significance. But the more we study it the more we shall marvel, until we can make our own the words with which the Blessed Virgin expressed her realization of the favour which had been granted her: "he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name." [3]

The state of grace is not merely the absence of mortal sin, as many people seem to imagine.

[1] Ps. viii. [2] Ps. xliv, 14. [3] Luke i, 49.

They look upon the soul as being in itself a very beautiful thing—a spirit, glorious in its various natural qualities, and far grander than any material object; mortal sin can defile it and make it hideous; but if there is no such sin it remains resplendent in all the glory of its spiritual nature and is thus (so it is thought) in the state of grace.

Such a view of the matter, however, falls far short of the truth. The state of grace is thus made to be a mere negative thing—namely, the absence of the defiling element of mortal sin. But the fact which we have to remember is that grace[1] is a positive reality superadded to the glorious natural endowments of the soul. These endowments are not left in all their natural beauty; they receive an additional glory which surpasses what they are in themselves far more than they themselves surpass the glories of the world around us; and it is the possession of this additional glory, rather than the mere absence of mortal sin, which constitutes the state of grace.

[1] In the course of this work whenever we use the term "grace" we shall understand by it "sanctifying grace" as opposed to "actual grace." Sanctifying grace, as we shall explain, is a permanent quality in the soul; actual grace, of course, is a passing help given by God for the performance of some act. See volume 17 of the present series.

The Catholic doctrine on this point is in direct opposition to the strange theories of Protestantism. Faced by his failure to control his violent and sensuous character, Luther evolved a theory which is a combination of pessimism and easy optimism. Through the fall of Adam, he maintained, our nature has become essentially evil and must ever remain evil; it is a mass of corruption, and even the redeeming blood of our Saviour does not cleanse or heal it; and he pressed his theory so far as to draw the conclusion that all our actions are sinful, not excluding those which we look upon as virtuous. Here we have the pessimism of the system: but now comes its easy optimism. For Luther taught that if only we will have complete confidence that the merits of Christ are actually applied to us, our sins are ignored, as it were, by God; our souls remain indeed hideous in themselves, but God covers them over with the merits of Christ so that these are looked upon by him as being ours; our sins are not "imputed" to us, but the merits of Christ are.

This is the famous doctrine of Justification by Faith. For the Lutheran, then, Justification does not mean (as it means for a Catholic) an inner change by which the soul becomes a sacred thing, but a mere external non-imputation of sins; and Faith means, not an assent to

truths divinely revealed, but a personal persuasion that the merits of Christ have been applied to us. This Faith, in the Lutheran system, is the only thing which counts: good works are of no avail—indeed, they are impossible, since all our actions are made evil by the evil source from which they spring. A further conclusion from Luther's principles is that there can be no such thing as Merit, a point with which we shall deal later on.

In what follows there will be frequent reference to the Protestant theory of Justification. This is inevitable, for, although our chief concern is with the positive statement of Catholic truth, the official statement of this truth by the Council of Trent was drawn up with direct reference to the errors of the sixteenth century.

In the first place, then, the Council lays it down that we become just before God not through a non-imputation of sin but by an interior renovation which blots out sin. This is effected by sanctifying grace, which is explained as a reality poured forth upon us and inhering in us.

Beyond any doubt, this is the teaching of Scripture and of the great leaders of Christian thought from the beginning. Within the compass of a small book like the present it is not

possible to give an adequate exposition of scriptural texts, still less to set out the teaching of Christian writers through the ages, but there readily come to the mind a number of expressions used in the Scriptures which show most clearly that the state of grace involves a real interior change in the soul. Consider such expressions as "born again," "regeneration," "renovation," "new creature." Here, surely, we have the idea of an inner change and not of a mere non-imputation of sin. Similarly when St Paul speaks of the "new man" who is "created in justice and holiness of truth,"[1] he is alluding to a marvellous change which is produced in us. Very striking, too, is the parallel which he draws between the results of Adam's sin and the restoration which has been accomplished by Christ. "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made just."[2] But the disobedience of Adam certainly brought about a real change in the souls of men, as Luther must be the first to admit: therefore Christ produces an inner change when through his grace many are made just.

The early teachers of Christian truth proclaimed the same doctrine in many striking ways. Thus in explaining the effects of Baptism they

[1] Eph. iv, 24. [2] Rom. v, 19.

frequently compared the water of the font to a mother: as the mother forms and fashions her child, so does the baptismal water form and fashion a new creature for God. Or as God in the work of creation produced living things out of the waters, so does he bring the soul to a new life in the waters of baptism. So insistent on this inner change are the early writers, and such a high ideal did they form of it, that they did not hesitate to say that we are deified; in fact they took this to be an admitted principle amongst Christians, for they made it a basis of argument against those who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, they argued, deifies us: therefore he is God, since none but God can deify the soul.

It would be easy to quote many striking and beautiful passages from the writings of the Fathers of the Church extolling the glory of the soul which Christ has washed in his blood. All this is directly contrary to the awful teaching of Protestantism which would make the soul even of the just man a sinful thing, essentially corrupt and loathsome. There can, then, be no doubt about what is the correct view of the matter: sanctifying grace is a real quality, of surpassing beauty, infused by God into the soul and making that soul worthy of the Creator

who fashioned it and the Redeemer who won it from the thraldom of sin.[1]

This, then, must be our first point: grace is a positive reality superadded to the soul. But what is the nature of this positive reality? Here we are faced by the inability of the human mind to grasp the magnificence of the glorious truth. We may use metaphors and comparisons; we may liken grace to the brightness of white-hot steel or to the brilliance of a diamond that sparkles in the light; but all such modes of speaking fall far short of the truth. They fail in various ways, but principally in one most important point which is necessary for a right understanding of what grace is. In all such figures of speech we compare sanctifying grace with something which is natural to the object to which it belongs; thus the brilliance of the diamond is natural to the diamond and is in the same order of being. But sanctifying grace is not natural to the soul; it belongs to a higher order of things. It is a supernatural quality which no created cause could possibly produce. It belongs to a new and an altogether higher world. This is an aspect of the matter which calls for careful consideration, and we beg the reader's attention

[1] Here no criticism is made of the Lutheran theory of Faith, but the point will be dealt with later on when we consider faith in Christ as the fundamental element in preparation for justification.

to what follows. The explanation shall be given with as little technicality as possible.

As the very form of the word indicates, the supernatural is something which is above, or higher than, that which is natural. But what are we to understand by the term "natural"? In ordinary usage it has various meanings, but in Catholic Philosophy and Theology it has a very precise meaning which must be rigorously adhered to. The natural, then, is something which belongs to the very essence or nature of a thing (as the power of reasoning belongs to man), or flows from its nature (as the skill of a workman flows from his nature), or is necessary or suitable for the existence and development of a thing (as air is necessary for man). Thus "natural" is not to be contrasted with "artificial," and if we are to keep to the strict meaning of the words we ought not to say, for example, that it is not natural for a diamond to sparkle since in its original (or, as we say, in its natural) condition it is a dull stone. In the technical sense of the term it is quite natural for a diamond to sparkle since this follows from its very nature.

Of course what is natural for one thing may be above the nature of another thing. Thus it is natural for a man to reason, but not for a dog;

natural for wood to float in water, but not for a bar of iron.

In the light of these explanations it will be seen that the supernatural is something which is above, or higher than, what belongs "naturally" to things; if this something is above that which belongs naturally to any creature, it is said to be "absolutely" supernatural; if it is above that which belongs naturally to some creatures but not to all, it is "relatively" supernatural. Thus, if a brute beast were to speak, this would be relatively, not absolutely, supernatural; but for a man to enjoy the Beatific Vision of God, face to face, is absolutely supernatural, since to see God by direct and immediate vision is above the natural order of all created beings, angelic as well as human.

To the reader who desires no more than to have unfolded before him something of the glories of sanctifying grace these explanations may appear wearisome: but they are necessary not only for the avoiding of positive error but also for the gaining of a clearer and grander idea of what this wonderful gift is. Another point must be explained before we pass on—a point of great importance. A distinction has to be made between that which is supernatural considered in itself (*supernaturale in se*), and that which is supernatural because of the way

in which it has been brought about (*supernaturale quoad modum*). Thus the restoration of a dead man to life is clearly supernatural: is it supernatural in itself or only supernatural in the manner of its production? The answer is that it is supernatural not in the first way but in the second: for the thing produced (namely, life) is not in itself supernatural, though it has been produced in a supernatural way. And the same is to be said of all miracles. On the other hand, whatever belongs to God himself, or involves some sharing of what is proper to God, is supernatural in itself, transcending the order not only of what creatures do but also of what they are.

The application of all this to the question of sanctifying grace will be seen more and more as we proceed, but for the present we simply assert the magnificent truth that grace is not only a positive reality in the soul, not only a reality which no created being could produce, but a reality which in itself is higher than the whole order of natural things (even angelic) and is truly divine. This brings us at once to a wonderful phrase of St Peter, who says that we are made "partakers of the divine nature."[1] Catholic theology has ever clung to the belief that here we have no mere figure of speech but the

[1] 2 Pet. i, 4.

declaration of a definite fact. We really are made to be partakers of the divine nature. It is not merely that our spiritual faculties of intellect and will establish a special likeness to God in our souls; that is true enough, but over and above this natural likeness to God a wholly supernatural quality is given to us which makes us to be of the same nature as God. In this connection we may recall the principle used by early writers in arguing the divinity of the Holy Ghost: the Holy Ghost deifies us; in other words makes us partakers of the divine nature. St Augustine puts the matter thus: "He descended that we might ascend, and whilst retaining his own divine nature he partook of our human nature, that we, whilst keeping our own nature, might become partakers of his." St Thomas Aquinas, echoing the constant teaching of the past, declares in a passage which the Church uses for the feast of Corpus Christi: "the only-begotten Son of God, wishing to make us partakers of his own divinity, took upon himself our human nature that having become man he might make men to be gods." And we know how the Church has enshrined this wonderful truth in one of the most beautiful of the prayers at Mass. "O God, who in creating human nature, didst marvellously ennoble it, and hast still more marvellously renewed it, grant that by the mys-

tery of this water and wine *we may be made partakers of his Godhead,* who vouchsafed to become partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord."

God, then, has deigned to touch us with his finger, and in touching us has transformed us into something like himself. We shall never understand in our present life in what this partaking of the Godhead consists: how could we understand it, seeing that the nature of the Godhead is itself above our understanding? We can, indeed, speak of it as the divine Light which shines in our souls, or as the divine Beauty which is bestowed upon us; or we may use illustrations such as that of St Thomas Aquinas, who says that we share the very nature of God as metal in the fire shares the nature of the fire. Such ways of speaking and such illustrations are all helpful, and the Christian soul, seeking to get some faint idea of the glory of sanctifying grace, will dwell upon them with joy. But a higher and truer way of viewing the matter is to think of grace as a communication to us of the divine Life itself. For God is a living being, not a lifeless thing like the shining metal or the glistening jewel, and they who share his nature must necessarily share his very life. A wonderful thought, truly, and one which leads us far in our search for a less inadequate idea of

what grace is. Let us dwell upon it for a moment.

We are familiar with the grades of life in the world around us. There is the life of the plant which separates it by an immense ocean of reality from all non-living things; there is the life of the animal with those wonderful powers of sensation and instinct which the plant does not possess; and there is the life of a rational being whose intellect and will raise him far above the brutes. Higher, indeed, than man there are the angels, but their life does not differ in order from the rational life of man; it is more perfect in many ways and is not bound up with the animal life which is part of man's nature; but it is a life of intellect and will. But there is yet a higher life, the incomprehensible, unutterable life of God, who, as the Scripture says, dwells in light inaccessible. This life of God is the fountain whence all life flows and, could we understand it, is the explanation of how and why there are three Persons in him. To share this life is clearly the grandest thing that can be imagined. It would seem, indeed, to be impossible; and impossible it certainly would be if we were limited to the natural order of things. Nothing in the world of created things could have brought it about and no human mind could have guessed it. Yet in this

life God has made us share—a greater work than when he called the world out of nothingness.

In the next chapter something more will be said about the nature of this partaking of the divine life, and we shall then see how it is a preparation for the Beatific Vision, and the basis of our claim to be in very truth the sons of God.

There are also other wonderful aspects of the state of grace which remain to be explained, but already we can see something of the grandeur of the Catholic doctrine, which asserts for man, even in the days of his earthly pilgrimage, a glory which raises him up to the Godhead and makes him most beautiful in the sight of the angels.

And so we make our own the words of David, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. . . . O Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in all the earth."[1]

[1] Sanctifying Grace is regarded by theologians as a "Habit." The term may be misleading, for by a Habit we usually understand a customary mode of acting, and this does not seem to fit in with the idea of Sanctifying Grace. But Habits may be either "operative" (which dispose one towards a particular way of acting) or "entitative" (which give a particular disposition to the thing itself, like beauty). Sanctifying Grace is an "entitative" Habit. For an explanation of "Habits," see *The Supernatural Virtues*, p. 1 *seq.*

CHAPTER II

SONS AND HEIRS

Divine Sonship—More than legal adoption—Actual kinship—Heirs—Intrinsic connection between Grace and Glory—Sharing Divine Life.

In this second chapter we are to consider two special aspects of the life of grace which God bestows upon us; the first is the sonship which comes with sanctifying grace, and the second is the fact that, in a fuller sense than at first sight would seem possible, we are made heirs of God and have already within us the beginnings of eternal glory.

St John bids us see "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."[1] In his infinite condescension God has made us his children. We know how sometimes a poor child is adopted, taken into a home, made one of the family, treated as a son or daughter, and even given a right to inherit all that belongs to those who have thus bestowed their love. God has done this for us and much more. Through the

[1] John iii, 1.

fall of our first parents we were cut off from him and came into existence bearing the dread heritage of original sin. But God ever wanted to bring us back, and to re-establish between himself and us the sweet relationship of father and child. For that purpose the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man and gave us "power to be made the sons of God."[1] Both St John and St Paul exult in proclaiming this act of divine condescension. "Dearly beloved," the first writes, with all the earnestness of the disciple of love, "we are now the sons of God: and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is. And everyone that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself."[2] To cherish the belief that we are really and truly the sons of God, and to cling to the hope that as sons we shall one day be allowed to gaze on the beauty and majesty of our heavenly Father, is to sanctify ourselves. St John himself has written few more consoling words than these. And St Paul announces the same great truth in sonorous terms that ring through the ages: there is no mistaking their emphasis. At the beginning of that wonderful little epistle to the Ephesians, in which he expounds so beautifully the mystery of Jesus, he

[1] John i, 12. [2] 1 John iii, 2-3.

cries out: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children* through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of his will: unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son." Nothing, surely, could be finer than this assertion of God's condescension in making us his sons through Jesus. And to the Galatians, who were being led astray by the errors of Jewish formalism which crushed all loving sense of sonship, he writes to remind them that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his son . . . that he might redeem them that were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."[1] This same idea of the liberty which belongs to us as sons dwelling, as it were, in our father's house, is expressed also in the epistle to the Romans. "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear: but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father. For the Spirit

[1] Gal. iv, 4-6.

himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God."[1]

In the light of such luminous teaching it is clear that it is in a very special sense that we are the children of God. St Paul, more particularly, assigns to us a sort of legal position in the house of God, in virtue of which we have both the freedom and the rights of sons: for, as he goes on to say at the end of the passage just quoted: "And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ."[2] We fail to do justice to a great and fundamental truth if we think of our sonship in terms of some vague favour which God has shown to us in virtue of which the term son could be used metaphorically. We must at least assign to our sonship the meaning which adoption had under the ancient Roman law. Amongst the Romans an adopted son lost his legal position in the family to which he belonged by blood, and became legally a member of the family into which he had been adopted, acquiring all the dignities and rights which would have been his if he had been a son by blood. In such a sense at least we must be the sons of God. But the truth carries us further than that. Our sonship raises us much higher, for God does for us what no Roman could do for the child whom he had adopted:

[1] Rom. viii, 15, 16. [2] Rom. viii, 17.

He makes us, in a very true and wonderful way, children "by blood." To appreciate this fact we have only to apply what has already been explained about the nature of Grace.

Sanctifying grace, as we have seen, is a positive reality infused into the soul by which we are made to share the divine life. At once we see the difference between our sonship and the sonship of those who are sons only by legal adoption. This legal adoption may be an act of wonderful love and condescension, and it may bring untold blessings with it; but the adopted son remains of foreign blood, with the physical characteristics which he inherited from his real parents. It is their blood that flows in his veins, their features that are copied in his face and form. But with the sons of God all is different. By sanctifying grace the very life of God is imparted unto them; they are grafted on to him, as it were; nay, they have been "born again," as our Saviour teaches us; they are a "new creature"; they have been "born of God" —"born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible."[1]

This is what God has done for us when he gave us the gift of sanctifying grace, so that we may well repeat, with that deeper gratitude which comes with greater knowledge, the words

[1] 1 Pet. i, 23.

of St John which have been already quoted: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and *should be* the sons of God."

"And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ."[1] The Church ends that magnificent profession of faith which we call the Nicene Creed with the words: "And I expect the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come." The Christian looks forward to heaven as his *home,* not simply as a place of happiness which he may reach if he is fortunate. Incorporated in Christ who reigns in glory, a true son of God, made already a sharer in the life of God, he may look upon eternal happiness as the completion of God's loving plan for him; and so in a calm spirit of hope and love he awaits the day of the Lord, not as a day of wrath and vengeance but as a day of homecoming. He must for a time fight the good fight and keep the faith and accept the sufferings which may be laid upon him, for he knows the truth of the words which St Paul added to his declaration of our heirship with Christ: "Yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him"; but his whole attitude is essentially one of gladness and hope "in Christ Jesus our Lord."

[1] Rom. viii, 17.

It is well that we should stress the fact—and rejoice in it—that grace makes us truly sons and heirs, and that consequently we can look upon heaven as truly our home. But there is something more than the fact that grace gives us a right to an eternal inheritance. Grace is already the beginning of glory; the second grows out of the first, much as the blossom grows out of the seed. How this is, the following explanations will show.

The catechism teaches us that the glory and happiness of heaven is "to see, love and enjoy God for ever"; to behold him who is all Beauty and Truth, to love him who is all Goodness, to enjoy him who is the Supreme Good; in a word, to possess the Beatific Vision. No created intellect can form an adequate idea of the Beatific Vision until this be actually experienced, yet theologians—guided by such hints as are given in Sacred Scripture and making use of forms of reasoning which faith has enlightened—have sought to set out the fundamental elements of the joy of the saints. They call attention to the fact that in the Scriptures the Beatific Vision is represented as "seeing" God. Our Blessed Saviour himself told us that the pure of heart "shall see God," and that the angels in heaven "always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."[1]

[1] Matt. xviii, 10.

There is the well-known saying of St Paul: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face."[1] And in St John's first epistle there is the very striking passage which has been quoted already: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is." Here, as will be noticed, St John makes our future likeness to God rest upon our seeing him as he is. This doctrine of a direct vision of God in heaven has been solemnly defined by the Church and is thus a matter of faith.

Filled with the glory of the direct vision of God, the soul necessarily is drawn to him in a transport of love. It sees him in all his overpowering goodness; it recognizes that only in him can happiness be found, and that in him is *all* happiness: and the will is drawn to him in an act of love that nothing can change. It is a matter of dispute amongst theologians as to whether the vision of God or the love of God is the essential element in the happiness of the blessed in heaven, but we need not go into the question: in any case, both belong to the happiness of heaven, and the love which the soul has for God depends upon the knowledge which it

[1] Cor. xiii, 12.

has of him. Hence, whatever view we hold about the essential element of happiness in heaven we must recognize that the direct vision of God is the foundation of the rest. Now, this vision of God is wholly supernatural. No created intellect can know God as he is by its natural powers—and this applies to angels as well as to men. Consequently, if the soul is raised so much above its natural condition as to have a face-to-face vision of the infinite God, some change must be wrought in it, elevating it to an order of things that is absolutely supernatural. The change is brought about by what theologians have aptly called the "light of glory."

This brings us to the point which we set out to explain, viz. the way in which grace is already the beginning of glory, as the seed is the beginning of the blossom. For grace is the beginning of that "light of glory" whereby the blessed in heaven see God; it is something which grows into the "light of glory" and for that reason it has been called the "seed of glory"—an expression which enshrines a great truth, and recalls the words of St John, who says: "Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin: for his seed abideth in him."[1]

The intrinsic connection between grace and

[1] 1 John iii, 9.

glory is not the least of the marvels of sanctifying grace. As Bishop Hedley beautifully expresses it in his *Retreat:* "We are given to possess on earth a gift of light and life which is substantially the same as the light which shall flood us in the heavens! For 'the grace of God is life everlasting.'[1] The apostle is saying that the result of sinfulness is death, and liberation from sinfulness is holiness; it is this holiness which he calls the 'charisma,' or grace of God; and of this 'charisma' he says, that it *is* life everlasting. One would have expected him to say that its 'result' was life everlasting. This would evidently be quite true. But St Paul's vivid expression is more true; for grace not merely deserves the vision of God, but (the veil being rent in two by bodily dissolution) takes, or has, that vision, as the eye takes in the morning when sleep departs."[2]

We have just seen that the Beatific Vision consists in the face-to-face vision of God as he is in himself, and that this vision of God is accompanied by unutterable love and joy; we have also explained that sanctifying grace is the beginning of this state of glory. But to see God as he is in himself and to love this infinite good, is the very essence of the divine life itself. God alone can fully comprehend all his own

[1] Rom. vi, 23. [2] p. 55.

infinite excellence, and the first and most fundamental aspect of the inner life of God is precisely this, that he gazes into the depths of his infinity: indeed, it would seem that the existence of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the result (so to speak) of this act of divine understanding. In a way quite impossible for us to grasp, the divine essence as known and comprehended by the divine intellect is the Son. And out of this knowledge which God has of himself there arises a mutual love of Father and Son: and this mutual love is the Holy Ghost. Hence the remark which was made in the first chapter, that if we could understand the divine life we should understand how and why there are three Persons in God: for this trinity of Persons is the result of the inner life of God, much as the existence of ideas in our intellect and of pictures of individual things in our imagination is the result of our life of thought and sensation. From this it follows that when the blessed in heaven are raised to the Beatific Vision they are given a real participation in the divine life itself; and it follows also that since sanctifying grace is the "seed of glory," it is likewise, in its own measure, a sharing in the very life of God. This sharing of the divine life will reach its fulness in the Beatific Vision, but even during our present life it grows and in-

creases, as supernatural knowledge and love of God grow stronger. "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." [1] Finally, the intrinsic connection which we have shown to exist between grace and glory throws into clearer light the wholly supernatural character of grace itself. For the Beatific Vision, as we have seen, is wholly supernatural; neither men nor angels could possess it by any powers of their own. But if the Beatific Vision is supernatural, grace which is its "seed" must be supernatural also.

[1] John x, 10.

CHAPTER III

TEMPLES OF GOD

God in the soul—Natural presence—Supernatural presence—All three persons present—Divine indwelling specially attributed to Holy Ghost.

It is a cherished part of Catholic faith that God dwells in an especial way in a soul which is in a state of grace.

This is the definite teaching of Christ himself. "If any one love me, he will keep my word. And my Father will love him: and we will come to him and will make our abode with him."[1] Elsewhere in the New Testament this indwelling of God is attributed in an especial way to the Holy Ghost. As is well known, St Paul insists upon the fact that the very bodies of Christ's true followers are the temples of the Holy Spirit. "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God?"[2] Hence he draws the conclusion that these bodies which enshrine the Spirit of God are sacred things and must not be defiled by sins of the flesh. As he

[1] John xiv, 23. [2] 1 Cor. vi, 19.

had said already in the same epistle: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are."[1] Here he is but echoing the teaching of his Master who said to his disciples on the last night of his life on earth: "I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you."[2]

It is this great truth of the dwelling of God in the souls of his friends that we must here consider, so that we may learn more about the wonders of the state of grace.

Of course it is true to say that God is everywhere, even in the soul of the sinner: but what concerns us here is the special way in which he is present in the soul of the just man. How is God present, naturally, in everything that exists? He is present in everything, first of all as the one who holds every single being in existence. Not only has he brought all things into existence but he also keeps them in existence by the direct exercise of his infinite power, without which they would fall back into nothingness. Just as light is dependent upon some source of light and would disappear if its source disap-

[1] 1 Cor. iii, 16-17. [2] John xvi, 7.

peared, so the very "existing" of things is dependent upon him who is the source of all existence. But God is also present in things as the cause of their every movement. He is the First Mover and the source of every movement, just as he is the source of all "existing." Hence it is true to say of every single being outside God that in him it lives and moves and has its being.

This, be it noticed, is in the natural order of things. Nothing could be, nothing could move, without this presence of God: thus by an absolute necessity, if things exist at all God must be in them. And the truth of this essential nearness of God is one of profound importance.

But there is another kind of nearness of God, based upon a totally different action which God may exercise in the human soul. Besides the acts of supporting in being and of operating in all the actions of his creatures, God deals in a totally different way with the soul that is in the state of grace. He impresses upon it that special likeness to himself of which we have already spoken; he infuses into it a new and a higher life which is a sharing of his own and the beginning of the life of the blessed; he implants virtues within it and acts upon it in all sorts of loving ways; and thus he penetrates it in an absolutely supernatural manner. That

he should hold us in being and should co-operate with us in all our ordinary actions is part of the natural order of things; but this is part of a supernatural order to which we have no right whatever. And this supernatural action within us clearly establishes a special kind of presence in our souls: he was present before, but now he holds us closer to himself and establishes a new, vital union with us. God's natural presence in the soul has often been likened to the way in which water fills a sponge; let us imagine, however, that the water possessed the power of producing at will various magnificent changes in the sponge, vitalizing every particle of it, and permeating it with its own reality in such a way that it received powers of sensation. We should then say that the water had entered into the sponge in a new way. So it is with God and the soul that he adorns with sanctifying grace. He revitalizes it, makes it sensitive to the touch of heavenly influences and bestows upon it something of his own beauty: and thus he makes his "abode" there.

But there is another side to this question of God's presence in the soul. How does the soul respond to the God who has deigned to come so nigh? In virtue of the powers which grace has brought to it, the soul has gained a knowledge and love of God which could not have

come to it otherwise. It knows him—though darkly, in the twilight of faith—as the supreme good; it sets him above all creatures; it loves him with the ardour of supernatural faith; and it rejoices in the possession of him. This is a new bond of union. When a natural object is thought about, longed for, loved, we say that it is enshrined in the heart: we have made it present to us, though in its actual reality it be far away. But in the case of a soul in grace the God who is thought about, loved, rejoiced in, is already actually present: and by its own action the soul clasps him and will not let him go. "I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him: and I will not let him go." [1] Thus there is a closeness more intimate than could be imagined if faith did not make it known to us: a closeness based upon the natural, physical presence of God within us, made immeasurably greater by God's most loving supernatural action upon us, and crowned by the final touch of sacred intimacy when the soul clings to him as its Lord and God.

Thus does the God of heaven dwell in human souls. He dwells there as in a temple: for his sovereign rights as God are there recognized, he is adored and praised, petition is made to him; and there he dispenses his favours. He dwells

[1] Cant. of Canticles iii, 4.

there also as a guest in a home where he is ever welcome: all that the home can produce is prepared to do him honour. And he dwells there as Friend. Between God and the soul there is mutual love—not the feeble sentiment which sometimes passes for love amongst men, but a love that is strong and true. Each, we may say, seeks the good of the other—God enriching the soul with wonderful gifts and protecting it by his loving Providence, the soul devoting itself and all its powers to God. And though God remains invisible as long as this life lasts, faith enables the soul to realize his presence and to rejoice therein. There is a striking passage in *The Interior Castle* in which St Teresa expresses this realization of God in a very vivid manner. "It is as if, when we were with other people in a well-lighted room, some one were to darken it by closing the shutters; we should feel certain that the others were still there, though we were unable to see them."[1]

Such is the wonderful privilege of the soul that is in the state of grace. We may rightly say that it already stands in the antechamber of heaven and is separated only by the thinnest of veils from the face of God. That veil is being worn thinner and thinner as the supernatural life of the soul increases, and when it altogether

[1] *Seventh Mansions*, ch. I, 12.

disappears the presence of God will take on a new and a higher form. God will then penetrate the soul more intimately still: he will be known not by images and comparisons, not in the obscurity of faith, but directly, as he is in himself, in the full brilliancy of the Light of Glory. But already the splendour of his face is breaking upon us, and the sound of that final approach is in our ears.

It may indeed be said that this presence of God in the soul is not recognized by us, or at least that it is not recognized by many of those who are in the state of grace. This is true, and one is inclined to echo the words of our Saviour: "if thou didst know the gift of God!" [1] Though God is present he is not directly perceived. He is to be known by faith, and faith in such matters presupposes instruction in the truth. It is often want of knowledge which holds back the Christian soul from a sense of God's presence which would fill it with joy and lead it on, with giant strides, towards true perfection of life. Or perhaps it is that one knows theoretically the doctrine of God's indwelling but has never made it one's own through the distractions and earthly interests of a life which, though free from serious sin, is still held down by constant tepidity. Such a life is indeed to be pitied—and

[1] John iv, 10.

to be feared: is it difficult to understand the language of the Lord who dwells in a tepid soul? "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."[1]

In this short exposition of the doctrine of the indwelling of God in the soul, we have thought of the presence of God as such—God who is three in one, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But this indwelling is commonly attributed to the Holy Ghost, as was seen in the texts which were quoted at the beginning of the chapter. The reasons for this "appropriation," as it is called, are set out both in the volume on the Blessed Trinity and in that on the Holy Ghost; here we need say no more than that the indwelling of God in the soul is pre-eminently an act of love, and since the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son as their mutual Love it is becoming that the divine indwelling and all the operations of grace should be attributed to him, just as the works of creation are attributed to the Father.

[1] Apocalypse iii, 15-16.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

All grace from Christ—Christ merits and produces grace—Incorporation in him—Function of faith in Christ—Luther's error—True preparation for Justification—Sacraments and faith in Christ.

WE have seen how intimate are the relations between God and the soul that is in the state of grace; and now we must see how intimate are the relations between that soul and Jesus Christ our Lord. For it is through Christ in his sacred humanity that we receive all the treasures of grace, and this in a deeper and fuller sense than many of us realize. Hence the present chapter: "Through Jesus Christ."

As we know, Jesus himself declared that he came into this world to restore supernatural life to fallen man. "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly,"[1] and the evangelist who records these words tells us that "as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God."[2] "He that hath the Son hath life" proclaims the same

[1] John x, 10. [2] John i, 12.

apostle, and "he that hath not the Son hath not life."[1] St Peter likewise tells us in terms that are stamped with his intense conviction of our dependence on Christ: "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."[2]

How, then, does Christ procure for us that life which he came to give? In the first place, by meriting it for us. By the whole of his life on earth, and especially by his passion and death, Christ merited that the supernatural life which we had lost in Adam should be restored to us. "And being consummated, he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation."[3] More than that, he actually produces grace in the soul by his action upon us. Just as he healed bodies by the touch of his hand or by the word of his mouth so also does he heal souls and bring back to them the life of grace. But in a deeper sense than this Christ is the cause of grace within us, and unless we have grasped this deeper sense our understanding of grace—nay, of Christianity itself—is incomplete. We refer to the important truth that the supernatural life of the soul comes to us through actual union with, or incorporation in, Christ. It is not by mere external action upon us, like the action of a seal upon the wax in which it leaves the

[1] 1 John v, 12. [2] Acts iv, 12. [3] Heb. v, 9.

impression of itself, or like the action of steam upon the engine which it sets in motion, that Christ produces grace in us. Rather is it like the action of a living organism that draws particles of matter into union with itself and thus makes them live. This is the very way in which Jesus himself expressed what happens. We all know his wonderful figure of the Vine and its branches. "Abide in me: and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing."[1] Hence the extraordinary significance of Holy Communion, the external union of the Body and Blood of Christ with our own frail humanity being both a symbol and a cause of the inner union which is aimed at. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him."[2]

This union with Christ is especially dear to St Paul, who made it one of his guiding thoughts. "You are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption."[3] According to

[1] John xv, 4-5. [2] John vi, 54-57. [3] 1 Cor. i, 30.

the great apostle of the Gentiles, all who are redeemed are incorporated in Christ and live by his life, so that he actually becomes to them "wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption." This is no mere metaphor; in the eyes of St Paul it is a tremendous but simple truth, upon which he insists time after time, which he uses in all sorts of connections and upon which he builds much of his preaching. Thus it is not merely "through" Christ that redemption and grace come to us, but "in" him —as he says many times. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, you shall appear with him in glory."[1] "God (who is rich in mercy) . . . hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places through Christ Jesus.[2] That he might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of his grace, in his bounty towards us in Christ Jesus."[3] Hence he

[1] Col. iii, 3-4.

[2] In the original Greek, and also in the Latin, this is "in Christ Jesus." Abbot Vonier remarks: "The phrase 'in Christ' occurs nearly eighty times in St. Paul's epistles; frequently it is translated into 'by,' 'through,' 'for the sake of' Christ. Yet such alterations ought not to deprive us of the wealth of mystical meaning contained in the original phrase 'in Christ'." *The Personality of Christ*, p. 108.

[3] Eph. ii, 4-6.

bids us "put on the Lord Jesus Christ,"[1] and tells us that "'in Christ' we are a new creature."[2] All this leads him to that triumphant exclamation: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me"[3]—an exclamation which was echoed by the great St Augustine in the words: "Let us break forth into thanksgiving, we are become not only Christians, but Christ."[4]

The question now arises, how is this incorporation in Christ and sanctification of the soul brought about? We answer, primarily and fundamentally by true faith in him. He is the one source of grace for fallen man; we depend entirely on the grace which he won for us by his passion and death; but this grace comes only to those who believe in him.[5] It is to those who "receive" him and "believe in his name" that he gives the "power to be made the sons of God." Thus before Christ can sanctify us and make us sons of God, we must "receive" him and believe in his name. And St Paul tells

[1] Rom. xiii, 14. [2] 2 Cor. v, 17. [3] Gal. ii, 20.

[4] The implications of this doctrine are more fully developed in vol. 19: *The Mystical Body of Christ.*

[5] The case of Infant Baptism is an exception, for the child is incorporated into Christ without any actual faith on its own part. This is an exception which God in his goodness has deigned to make. The special consideration of this case does not belong to the present place, but it may be remarked that according to the traditional teaching the faith of the Church takes the place of the faith of the child.

us that the just man lives by faith,[1] and that we are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." [2] As a modern writer has well expressed it, faith is "a kind of psychic link between the soul and Christ" [3]—a bond without which there can be no "incorporation" and no transmission of supernatural life.

At first sight it might seem as if this insistence on the function of faith were akin to the Protestant theory of Justification by Faith. But Catholic doctrine is very different. Luther held that faith alone brought Justification, to the exclusion of all good works. "Good works," in fact, were impossible, according to his theory of the essential corruption of our nature. And the very faith which he so extolled was not so much an intellectual assent to the divinity of Christ and to the doctrine of the redemption, as a personal persuasion that our sins are "covered over" and no longer imputed to us.

The stress which Luther placed on the fundamental importance of recognizing Christ as our redeemer must not blind us to the essentially vicious character of his theory, which leads logically and inevitably to disregard of the laws of right conduct. We must not treat our Saviour as a cloak to cover up our own transgressions.

[1] Rom. i, 7. [2] Gal. iii, 26.
[3] Vonier: *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 6.

He is indeed our hope, our life, of whose fulness we have all received. But it is not by the Lutheran "faith" that his grace comes to us. The process of Justification is much more complex, as we now proceed to show.

The first element in the great work of Justification is the grace of God—actual grace. No man can have faith in Christ, no man can even have a genuine desire to possess it, unless the grace of God first draw him.[1] It is for man to accept this grace or to reject it. If he accepts it and listens to the voice of God speaking to him, he is led on to make a true act of faith; that is, he is enabled by God to believe what has been divinely revealed, and more particularly the doctrines of the Redemption and of the forgiveness of sins. With this belief in his heart he is moved to hope in God and to love him, and to turn his heart away from sin. Thus, under the influence of actual grace, a soul is prepared for Justification. Hence it is not a matter of faith alone, but of faith which leads to hope and love and genuine sorrow: yet faith is the foundation of the whole process, or, as the Council of Trent puts it, "the beginning, the

[1] Our dependence in this respect on God's help is explained in the volume *Actual Grace* in the present series, chapter iv, to which the reader is referred for several important points which have a bearing upon the present question.

foundation, and the root of all Justification."[1]

All is now ready for actual incorporation in Christ, which will bring grace and life to the soul. It is part of his gracious purpose that this should be accomplished by means of the sacrament of Baptism, which is essentially the sacrament of a new birth in Christ Jesus. It is thus that a man "puts on" Christ. "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ," says St Paul[2]; or, as he expresses it elsewhere, taking his idea from the ancient ceremony of Baptism when the neophyte was plunged under the baptismal water: "Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."[3] But Baptism itself presupposes the living faith in Christ of which we have spoken. "He that *believeth* and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."[4] And sometimes, as we know, the soul is justified before the waters of Baptism have flowed over it; for faith can inspire a love

[1] Session vi, chap. viii. The whole process of preparation for Justification was carefully explained by the Council: the account in the text is a brief summary of what may be read at much greater length in this famous 6th Session.

[2] Gal. iii, 27. [3] Rom. vi, 3-4. [4] Mark xvi, 16.

and a sorrow for sin so intense that Christ does not wait for the divinely appointed sacrament of initiation but draws the soul to himself and makes it one with him.

We are speaking here of the case of one who has lived in infidelity and without Baptism and in mature years first turns to God. But faith is equally necessary for him who has lost the grace which once he had and turns again to God. Just as for the first there is Baptism, for the second there is Penance: but neither is of any avail without faith. Indeed, faith is necessary for every Sacrament, whether it restores a man to the friendship of God or increases the grace which he already possessed; for as St Thomas says, "the sacraments are certain signs which profess the faith by which a man is justified."[1] Of course they are more than signs of faith; they are signs of the inner grace which is produced in the soul, and of this grace which they signify they are at the same time the instrumental causes; but it is well to insist that without faith they will not achieve their effect.[2]

[1] *Summa*, III, 61, 4.

[2] The reader is referred to Abbot Marmion's beautiful book, *Christ the Life of the Soul*, for the development of points which have been briefly touched upon in the present chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITIES

Sanctifying Grace and supernatural action—Infused Virtues—Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In the course of the preceding pages much emphasis has been laid upon the fact that sanctifying grace is a form of supernatural life. But all life is essentially a power of internal action, of self-movement such as the processes of growing, feeling, thinking, willing; and every different grade of life has its own special forms of activity. It is therefore natural for us to ask the question: What special forms of activity belong to the life of grace?

It is well to keep before our minds the truth that sanctifying grace of its very nature leads to the ineffable activity of the Beatific Vision. The life of grace is at present incomplete; it is like the life of an embryo which does not yet show the marvels which will be revealed in the fully developed organism. It is the "seed" of a more wonderful life than has yet appeared. The full activity, then, which is proper to sanctifying grace is the activity involved in that

intuitive vision of God, and that overwhelming love of him, which constitute the happiness of the blessed in heaven. But the life of grace has already its own special form of activity: What can we say about it?

The first thing to be said about it is not easy to understand unless one is used to theological and philosophical forms of thought: but it is of fundamental importance in the present connection. To put it in a sentence, as a result of sanctifying grace actions which would have remained "natural" become intrinsically "supernatural." Here, again, we have these ideas "natural" and "supernatural," and in a somewhat different connection. We have had occasion to speak of sanctifying grace as a supernatural quality, and of the Beatific Vision as something proper to God and therefore absolutely supernatural, and in these cases it is not difficult, in the light of the explanations which have been given, to understand what is meant. But perhaps it is less easy to understand what is meant when we speak of an action becoming supernatural. Let us put the matter as follows. At the present moment the light of the sun is streaming into the room where these lines are written, through panes of ordinary clear glass; what would be the effect if richly coloured glass were to be substituted for the ordinary glass?

The light itself would be affected and would be tinged with various colours. In a similar sort of way, when actions proceed from a soul that is enriched with sanctifying grace they receive (or may receive) a new quality because of the source from which they come. Or, just as water which comes from a peaty soil carries with it the characteristics of peat, so do the actions which proceed from grace carry in themselves the characteristics of grace itself. We cannot submit a human action to any process of examination like a chemical analysis, but if we could we should discover a new element in the activities of grace just as the chemist discovers a new element in peaty water. And that new element is "supernatural": it belongs to the order of divine things.

When we say, then, that grace gives us the power of performing supernatural actions we do not mean that we receive the power of producing supernatural effects, like changing water into wine or the substance of bread into the body of Christ; nor do we mean that we become capable of doing such things as reading the future or seeing the thoughts of our fellowmen; but we mean that we become capable of performing actions which are not in any sense miraculous but are intrinsically elevated so as to become in themselves supernatural.

Behind this somewhat difficult line of thought there lies a very glorious reality. Not only is the soul made beautiful by the grace which is given to it; not only does it become a temple and a home in which God deigns to dwell; but it receives a power of performing actions which, apart from the reward which is promised them, are more wonderful in themselves than the noblest natural efforts of the greatest genius whom the world has ever known. As breezes that blow from a land of spices are laden with perfumes, so are the supernatural actions which come from a soul in grace laden with the perfume of God himself. Nor is this surprising, for they are the actions not of man as he is in himself, but of man as he is incorporated in Christ and engrafted on the Vine whose life flows through his veins.

In the natural order of things a man acts through his various faculties; he thinks and reasons by his intellect, chooses by his will, sees by his sight, and so on. In the supernatural order of which we have been speaking something of the same holds good. We have said that together with sanctifying grace man receives power to perform supernatural actions. Now, according to the common explanation of theologians, this power of performing supernatural actions is exercised through certain

quasi-faculties which always accompany grace. Grace itself is a new nature—a "new creature" —and just as my ordinary nature has natural faculties which flow from it and through which I perform my natural actions, so this new nature has corresponding "faculties" by which it performs its natural acts.[1] These "faculties" are known as Infused Virtues and they differ in various important respects from ordinary virtues—so much so, indeed, that there is a danger of confusion in the use of the term virtue as applied to them. In the first place they are not acquired as the result of repeated efforts and for this reason they are called "infused"—that is, produced directly in the soul by God. In the second place they do not (at least directly and immediately) give us a facility and readiness in acting: what they do is to give us a power of performing actions which are supernatural in character.[2]

[1] One uses the word "faculties," or "quasi-faculties," though strictly speaking they are rather special qualities superadded to my ordinary faculties in virtue of which these are "supernaturalized" and become capable of performing supernatural actions.

[2] There is a difference of opinion amongst theologians as to whether Infused Virtues give a facility in action or not. The matter is discussed in technical works on theology; but in any case a point to insist upon is that their direct effect is to make us capable of performing acts which are intrinsically supernatural and therefore quite different in character from actions performed through a natural virtue. One important result of

First amongst the Infused Virtues are the three Theological Virtues by which the soul raises itself to God in supernatural Faith, supernatural Hope, supernatural Charity. That these three virtues are infused into our souls, together with sanctifying grace, is the explicit teaching of the Church: but it is the common teaching of theologians that the other virtues—Moral Virtues as they are called—are also infused by God. Thus endowed, the sons of God are enabled to live a life on earth which is glorious in the sight of their Father who is in heaven. They must struggle, indeed, against many enemies both within and without them; the practice of virtue remains difficult, and there may be many setbacks; as it was with labour and toil and in the sweat of his face that Adam was set to labour, so, too, is it with much strain and tribulation that they must work out their salvation; but they are the sons of God, and besides the new nature which has been given to them they possess these wonderful springs of supernatural activity.

Yet it is not sufficient that God should have

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this is that such supernatural acts have a true value towards eternal life, as we shall see when we deal with the question of Merit. But the question of the Supernatural Virtues is dealt with in a special volume of "The Treasury of Faith": they are spoken of here only in so far as they enter into the working of sanctifying grace in the soul.

given to his children this new nature and these supernatural powers of action. If these are to do all that this new life involves they have need of constant assistance. Supernatural life requires not only sanctifying grace and the Infused Virtues but also the constant assistance of actual grace—that is, of natural assistance given us for the performance of special actions. This actual grace is a complement of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the essential thing; it is this which gives us supernatural life; but we are so weak that we cannot keep that life or do all the things which it involves unless from time to time, as circumstances require it, God comes to our assistance and gives us present help.[1] Consequently when we enumerate the great things which God has done for us in order that we may become his sons and live as heirs of heaven, we may put it thus: first he draws the soul by actual grace and thus prepares it for Justification; then he breathes into it the breath of supernatural life by means of sanctifying grace; at the same time he places in it those powers of supernatural life which we call the Infused Virtues; and subsequently, instead of leaving the soul to struggle on with the means already at its disposal, he assists it

[1] The necessity under which we labour of being thus helped by God is explained in the volume on *Actual Grace*.

in all sorts of ways by further actual graces.

But this is not the whole story of the provisions which God has made, in the ordinary dispositions of his grace, for the supernatural life of the soul. Besides sanctifying grace and actual grace and the Infused Virtues there are also what are known as the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, seven in number. These seven Gifts are mentioned by the prophet Isaias who speaks of them as endowments of the future Messias. "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety: and he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord."[1] There can be no doubt that God produces in the soul of the just man supernatural realities corresponding to the seven great names here used by the prophet, and the Church teaches us to pray that the Holy Ghost may give us this sevenfold gift; but there is some obscurity about the way in which they are to be explained, not only in regard to each considered by itself but also in regard to their general character. What is a "gift of the Holy Ghost"? What does it do for us? Does it differ from the Virtues? The answer which theologians commonly give to these questions (following St

[1] Isa. xi, 2-3.

Thomas Aquinas) runs thus. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are special dispositions produced by God in the soul in virtue of which we become sensitive to the touch of actual grace. Just as some people are peculiarly sensitive to various impressions in the natural order—of sight, sound, touch, etc.—so are the children of God made sensitive to the influences which their Father exercises upon them and by which he would lead them on in the way of sanctification. A little thought will show that these dispositions produced in the soul are of very great importance in the spiritual life. By means of them the soul is brought more directly under the hand of God, responds instinctively to the touch of his grace and may be led on to the heights of sanctity.

Space does not allow that we should explain in detail the special nature of each of the seven gifts, but a few words about one or two of them may help to explain their general character and their importance in the life of grace. Let us take the first of them, the gift of Wisdom. In virtue of this gift the soul is disposed to recognize in God the infinitely good, the infinitely lovable. It does this not as the result of a cold process of reasoning, but instinctively as though by actual contact with God. It has been prepared by God to see him as the sover-

eign good and the moment he reveals himself it recognizes him for what he is, and cleaves to him. And this is done with all the ardour of a loving son. Charity, the queen of the virtues, is thus perfected, for its operations receive a keenness and a promptness which otherwise they would not possess, and the soul is led on by rapid strides if only it does not put obstacles in the way of grace. Similarly the gift of knowledge gives to the soul a readiness in the perception of the true value of earthly things. Here again it is not a matter of cold reasoning: it is rather a sort of instinct by which the soul almost intuitively recognizes that creatures are of no real value save in so far as they minister to eternal interest. Who does not see the supreme importance of such gifts in the supernatural life of the soul?

Each gift might well be studied by itself in order that its vast, practical importance may be recognized and appreciated. We can truly apply to them those words of St Paul: "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."[1] Assuredly the sons of God are led on by the Spirit of God: and the more they surrender themselves to this divine influence, the more they will approach that state of perfection to which they are called and that

[1] Rom. viii, 14.

state of union with God which is the prelude to the end of sanctifying grace, the Beatific Vision.[1]

[1] A further study of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost would show the important part they play in Divine Contemplation and the Mystical life. Indeed the whole theology of sanctifying grace bears upon the question of true Mysticism: but the connection between the one and the other cannot be worked out here. Much important matter can be found in three works by three modern French Dominicans: *De l'Habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les Ames Justes* (Froget), *La Contemplation Mystique* (Joret), and *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation* (2 vols.), by Garrigou-Lagrange. Another very beautiful work on somewhat different lines is *La Grâce et La Gloire* (2 vols.), by Père Terrien, S.J.

CHAPTER VI

GROWTH IN GRACE

Growth possible—Caused by God—How caused by ourselves—Natural facility in good and increase of grace—No diminution.

We are now in a better position to realize how wonderful is the supernatural "organism" which God has fashioned in the souls of his children. First there is sanctifying grace itself which affects the very substance of the soul, making it a new creature, giving it a new life. Then there are the Infused Virtues which affect the faculties of the soul and give them the power of performing supernatural actions. Further, by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, God gives to our faculties, already elevated by the Infused Virtues, that special sensitiveness which makes them respond more readily to his touch. And on the soul thus prepared he is ever acting by Actual Grace, as a musician might play upon an instrument of unwonted charm.

To this loving action of God it is our task to respond, so that the life of grace may grow

more and more within us "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."[1] It is this growth in grace which we must now briefly study.

Grace itself is a free gift of God who gives it in the measure which seems good to him. "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ."[2] To one man there are given five talents, to another two, whilst another receives only one; but all must trade with what they have and labour to increase their store. How is this increase to be brought about?

We may say at once that the increase of grace is the work both of God and of ourselves, but in very different ways. First, it is the work of God. In some cases he gives this increase in answer to prayer. The Church teaches us to pray for such an increase, and for this purpose puts beautiful prayers upon our lips. Take as an example the well-known Collect for the Mass of the 13th Sunday after Pentecost: "Almighty and eternal God, give unto us an increase of faith, hope, and charity." Here we look to God to increase the supernatural life of our souls as an act of his goodness. But perhaps we may say that the normal and most efficacious way in which God provides for an

[1] Eph. iv, 13. [2] Eph. iv, 7.

increase of the supernatural life of our souls is by the Sacraments. The Sacraments are not merely touching ceremonies, beautiful in their prayers, their old associations, their symbolism, but they are actually causes of grace. God uses them as his instruments for the production, or the increase, of supernatural life, and they are meant to play an important part in our spiritual history. This part has been dealt with in a special volume of this series[1] and its importance cannot easily be exaggerated. We cannot deal here with the way in which the Sacraments cause or increase grace in our souls, but we would remind the reader of two things. First, that the grace caused in us by the valid reception of a sacrament is due not to our own efforts in the receiving of the sacrament, but to the sacrament itself. Of course we have certain things to do before the sacrament can produce its effect, but the effect is due not to these things which we do but to the sacrament. This is expressed by theologians technically by saying that the grace of the sacraments is produced *ex opere operato* and not *ex opere operantis*.

The second thing to which we would call attention is the truth that in the use of the Sacraments it is God who is the ultimate cause of grace; the outward rite is but an instrument

[1] *The Sacramental System*, by the Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J.

which he uses for the production of this effect. Hence it is quite a mistake to suppose (as Protestants do) that the sacrament comes between the soul and God, and lessens our dependence upon him. Still less is it true that we look upon the Sacraments as having a sort of magical power. Of themselves they are merely signs; they produce grace only as used by God from whom the grace flows as from its source, and they are not independent of our dispositions.

Leaving this part of our subject with these brief remarks, we pass on to consider how our own actions can produce an increase of grace in the soul. Of course this cannot be by our own unaided efforts; if we can do anything in this respect it is only in response to, and with the help of, the grace which God gives us. It is a fundamental principle of Catholic theology that we can do nothing of ourselves towards our salvation;[1] and this is true of the growth in grace which we are here considering. But we can correspond with grace; and by corresponding with grace we can increase the supernatural life which we already possess. This is evident from the teaching of the New Testament. We have already heard St Paul speaking of the development of the life of grace within us "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of

[1] See *Actual Grace*, ch. III.

the fulness of Christ," and it is clear that this development is at least in part dependent upon our own personal efforts. A few verses further on he exhorts his hearers: "that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ."[1] And St Peter says: "Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions, as new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation."[2] But this is surely an exhortation to use our own efforts so that we may deepen within ourselves the supernatural life of grace. Hence in his second epistle he writes: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[3]

Here we have another difference between the Protestant theory of Justification and the true doctrine of the New Testament. In the Protestant theory, it will be remembered, Justification is a mere external non-imputation of sin, and this does not admit of growth; our sins are either imputed to us or they are not. The passages which we have quoted are meaningless unless there be, as the Church teaches, a super-

[1] Eph. iv, 14-15. [2] 1 Pet. ii, 1-2. [3] 2 Pet. iii, 18.

natural life in which we go from virtue to virtue, are renewed from day to day and thus become more and more justified.[1]

The fact being admitted that we can grow in grace as the result of our own efforts (as contrasted with the growth which comes from God in answer to prayer or through the use of the sacraments), the question arises: How do our efforts bring about this increase? We answer that it is by *meriting* an increase of grace that we are able to develop our supernatural life. Our own efforts do not actually produce the increase, but God grants it as a reward. And together with the increase of sanctifying grace there is a corresponding increase in the Infused Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost—all as a result of merit. Hence there are important differences between the growth of natural life and the development of supernatural life. To a certain extent natural life may be said to grow of itself: there is a natural development and gradual unfolding of powers, given a fit environment. Besides this, the very actions of a living thing may be said to quicken and develop its life in so far as they perfect its natural powers by producing in them promptness, ease and accuracy in their operations. But in the supernatural life it is different. Grace does not grow

[1] See *Trent*, Session VI, ch. 10.

of itself; neither do the supernatural activities of the soul produce, or increase, the grace within it; God alone gives grace and God alone increases it; but, as we have said, the increase can be merited, and it is in this sense that, with the help of God, our own actions can bring about the growth of the life of grace.[1]

It might be objected that supernatural virtues, and with them the whole supernatural life, are directly increased by our very efforts, for it is a matter of experience that a good man who possesses the infused moral virtues is able to increase them by the practice of virtue. Take, for example, an earnest person who for the love of God sets himself the task of acquiring greater patience; day by day he puts a guard over himself, and checks the various movements of impatience which arise within him, and gradually acquires a habit of self-control. During all this time he is exercising the supernatural virtue of patience, and consequently it would seem that by his own efforts he is developing this virtue just as a non-religious man might develop a natural habit of patience.

This objection is worth considering for it

[1] We have here assumed that there is such a thing as Merit in the eyes of God—a fact which was denied by the Reformers. The general question of Merit will be discussed in the next chapter. Our present purpose is to explain that increase of grace may be merited by us but is not directly produced by us.

introduces an interesting point in connection with the life of grace. In the case supposed we must notice the distinction between two quite different things. These two things are, facility in practising patience and the increase of the infused, supernatural virtue of patience. By repeated acts a man increases what we may call his natural power of restraining himself; this increase follows the ordinary psychological laws according to which habits are developed; but the increase of the supernatural virtue (and of grace itself) is another matter altogether. As we have already tried to explain, the infused, supernatural virtues are not so much new powers of action as qualities superadded to our natural powers of action which supernaturalize these and make them capable of performing acts which are supernatural in character. The development of facility in operation (apart from some extraordinary grace of God) must be the result of effort on our part; the growth of grace and of the infused virtues is produced not by ourselves but by God, though it can be merited by us.

Here we are touching upon points which are dealt with in the volume on *The Supernatural Virtues,* to which the reader is referred; it was necessary, however, to say something about the matter in this discussion of Sanctifying Grace.

The Christian soul, then, has it within his power to increase the treasure of grace which has been committed to him. He can pray for it, he can approach the Sacraments with the knowledge that these are divinely appointed means of advancing in grace, he can exercise himself in good works. And thus his soul will become more and more God-like, and the glory of the Beatific Vision (to which the whole of the supernatural order is directed) will be intensified. For there is a proportion between Grace and Glory; the greater the first, the greater the second. But that brings us to the question of Merit, which we shall discuss in the following chapter.[1]

[1] Whilst grace can be increased within us, it is never diminished (although, of course, it can be lost altogether). This statement probably runs counter to the idea which many Catholics form of the effects of venial sin; they look upon venial sin as weakening the supernatural life of the soul and diminishing the amount of sanctifying grace which we possess. But there is no such diminution: if there were, long continuance in a course of venial sin could extinguish grace altogether: and this is not the case. Yet venial sins certainly imperil the life of the soul. If a man becomes habituated to venial sins he loses his sense of the sanctity of God, his self-control is weakened, self-love gets the upper hand and sooner or later a big temptation will overthrow him. Besides, a man who is careless in regard to venial sins is less likely to receive great helps from God.

It is true that God *could*, if he wished, diminish the grace in a soul, just as he can increase it. But it is certain that he never does.

CHAPTER VII

GRACE AND MERIT

Possibility of Merit—Protestant error—Conditions for Merit—What we can merit—Merit "de condigno" and "de congruo."

It is a treasured belief of the Catholic Church that the soul which is in the state of grace can merit eternal reward. This was denied by the Reformers who urged two objections against the Catholic doctrine of Merit. First, they said, if we merit in the eyes of God we are making God our debtor, which cannot be; and secondly, they urged that to claim merit for our own actions is to take away from the sovereign merits of Christ who alone has merited for us the rewards of eternal life. We have now to show that the doctrine of Merit is clearly contained in Sacred Scripture and that the objections which we have mentioned are based upon a misunderstanding and are without any force.

The justification of the assertion that man can merit eternal reward stands out very clearly in the pages of the New Testament. St Paul certainly believed that he had merited when

he wrote the well-known words: "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me but to them also that love his coming."[1] Notice the words "crown of justice" and "just judge" which express so forcibly the idea of a recompense which has been merited and is due in justice. And those who suffer for Christ are encouraged by him with the thought of the reward which will be theirs. "Be glad and rejoice," he says, "for your reward is very great in heaven."[2] Very striking, too, is the glimpse which our Saviour gives us of the great reckoning which will take place at the last day. Some souls are damned. Why? Because their bad lives have deserved it. Others are admitted to glory. Why? Because their good lives have merited it. Just as evil action deserves its punishment so does virtuous action deserve its reward: such is the only conclusion which can be drawn from our Saviour's words.

But does not this doctrine of merit mean that God is made our debtor? And is not this quite impossible? The answer to this argument of the Protestants is easy. I may have a right to recompense from another either because I

[1] 2 Tim. iv, 7-8. [2] Matt. v, 12.

have done him a service which has put him under an obligation to me, or because he had previously promised me this recompense if I did certain things. Now it is quite true that I cannot claim a return from God on the first of these grounds, since that would indeed be to make him my debtor; but does the objection hold if my claim is based upon a promise which he has made? Clearly it does not. In this case God has shown himself a most bountiful Lord in promising me a reward. Apart from his promise I could have no right to a return for what I have done. This would be true even if the reward were something in the natural order of things, such as health or wealth; still more true is it when the reward is supernatural: the Beatific Vision. But, given his promise, I have a right to the reward if I do what was required of me: God owes it not so much to me as to himself.

In this connection it is worth noticing that eternal life is both a reward and a gift. It is a gift, since we owe it to the bountiful love of God who freely chose to set it as the end of our action, and freely gives us the means of attaining it; it is at the same time a reward, because in his wisdom God has made the possession of it dependent upon our own action.

Similarly there is no force in the second ob-

jection that the doctrine of merit takes away from the sovereign merits of Christ. For we owe it entirely to the merits of Christ that we are able to merit for ourselves. He has won for us the power of meriting; without him we could never do anything which would merit in the sight of God. This is more wonderful than if eternal life were in no way dependent upon our own actions.

In the light of what has been said it is evident that a promise (or something equivalent to a promise) on the part of God is an essential condition for real merit in his sight. But there are other conditions which it is important that we should notice. First of all no man can really merit before God unless he be in the state of grace. It is only as part of the living vine that we can bear fruit, according to Christ's own saying: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me."[1] And St Paul tells us that "if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[2] In other words, unless I am in the

[1] John xv, 4. [2] 1 Cor. xiii, 2-3.

friendship of Christ by divine love, which is inseparable from sanctifying grace, I cannot merit in the slightest way, even though I seem to perform acts of heroic virtue. Hence a man is indeed sowing the sands if he remains in a state of sin and yet fancies that by performing good actions he can merit before God.

It is not surprising that sanctifying grace should be a condition for all real merit before God. Without it, we are cut off from God and in a state of enmity with him, whether we have fallen from grace or have never become his children by Baptism: how then can we expect anything from him in return for our actions? Still more, how can we merit to share his life in heaven? But with sanctifying grace, we are his sons, sharers of his nature; and it is not difficult to see how becoming it is, and how much in harmony with God's loving plan, that to such sons there should be given a promise of reward for the good actions which they perform.

Another condition for Merit is that the act should be done for God. This is a point concerning which there has been considerable discussion amongst theologians who differ at least in the way in which they express themselves. Our statement of this condition does not mean (as the reader may be pardoned for thinking it means) that before an act can be meritorious it must be

done with the express intention of doing it for God. In fact it would seem certain that all morally good acts which are performed by a soul in the state of grace are meritorious in the sight of God, even though he is not thought of in any way when they are done. Such a soul has chosen God as its supreme good to whom all other things are subordinated; hence until that choice is retracted all its actions are governed by the principle "God first"—in other words, by the principle of Divine Charity. Consequently we can say that every morally good action which we perform comes under this great principle and is meritorious in the sight of God. It is "done for God" in so far as it is part of a mode of life in which all is directed to God.

This may seem to be too comfortable a doctrine, since it makes the sphere of supernatural merit extremely wide and very easy of access; but it rests on sound theological principles, and is generally admitted by theologians. And in this connection we must remember another principle which is widely admitted, viz. that all actions which we freely perform are either definitely good or definitely bad; there is no such thing in practice as a free act which is neither good nor bad. Considered in itself, and apart from its circumstances, an act may be "indifferent," as all admit; but it would seem

that in the circumstances in which it is performed an act must be either good or bad. If we follow this opinion, which has the authority of St Thomas Aquinas and many great thinkers, we must say that the possibility of merit for the children of God is indeed wide. As long as no warping element of self-love or other similar fault enters into their actions, they will merit all the day long, even though they do not consciously refer all their actions to God. Nevertheless the merit of their actions will be greater in proportion to the way in which love of God becomes more and more a directive principle in all they do, as that the more frequently and fervently they refer their actions to God the greater will be their merit.

Besides these conditions for supernatural Merit there are certain others which need not detain us, as they are more or less obvious. Thus, the act must be free and it must be performed during the course of life, since there is no merit after death. The conditions which we have explained are the important ones and others which might be mentioned are reducible to them.

But is eternal life the only thing which we can merit from God? No, there are other things which we can merit. In the preceding chapter we saw that the just man can merit an increase

of grace—a truth which is taught explicitly by the Council of Trent. But whilst it is reasonably certain that we merit eternally by all good actions, it is not so certain that every good action merits an increase of grace. Many theologians hold that in order that we should merit an increase of grace our actions must reach a certain degree of fervour corresponding to the degree of grace which we already possess. Thus, according to this view, if our present degree of grace and of the infused virtues which accompany it is equivalent to 5, and the fervour of our action is equivalent to 3, we shall indeed win a title to eternal reward corresponding to the value of our action, but we shall not obtain a present increase of grace and the infused virtues. Whatever may be thought about this, it is certain, and a matter of Catholic faith, that increase of grace can be merited.

Since sanctifying grace is necessary for merit it will be realized that there are many important things which no man can merit. Thus the first actual grace which a man requires to lead him to faith in God is quite outside the sphere of merit; it is God's pure gift, and no amount of natural virtue can establish a title to it. Similarly the first infusion of sanctifying grace cannot be merited. Nor can the man who has fallen away from God really merit his

restoration to grace, or even the actual graces which he needs in order to recover the life which he has lost. We may, indeed, pray whilst we are in the state of grace that if we should ever be so unfortunate as to lose the friendship of God there may be given to us the grace of repentance. But God is in no way bound to hear this prayer.

Final Perseverance, too, is a thing which cannot be merited in the strict sense of the word. This great gift is bound up with the problem of Predestination and is dealt with in the volume on *Actual Grace* (pp. 35-39).

Can we merit graces and blessings for others? Strictly speaking, we cannot. Only our Saviour, who was constituted the head of the human race in all matters that pertain to eternal life, could truly merit for others. The rest of men can pray for others, and they can even make satisfaction for the sins of others, but they cannot merit for them. To merit is entirely a personal affair. But there is a title to reward which is lower than that of merit in the strict sense, yet is of real value. It is what theologians call merit "de congruo" (merit of congruity), as contrasted with that strict merit of which we have been speaking, and to which they give the name merit "de condigno" (merit of desert). This merit of congruity is based not upon a

title in justice, but upon a certain fitness, or what we may call a reasonable expectation that in view of what we have done a return will be made. Thus if I have shown great kindness to another, and he in turn has an opportunity of doing me some service, I shall feel it to be only natural that he should do the service. There is no question of justice; it is a matter of what we may call "decency"—of merit "de congruo." Now, as between ourselves and God there are several things which cannot be merited in the strict sense of the word, yet they come under the head of this merit "de congruo." Hence, although the man who has not yet been justified cannot strictly merit justification, nevertheless by responding to the actual graces which are given to him he can merit it "de congruo"; and in a similar way the sinner by his response to actual grace can merit further grace "de congruo." And this applies to meriting for others. Though we cannot merit for them in the strict sence of the word, we can merit for them "de congruo" whatever we can merit for ourselves. Hence in our efforts to obtain favours for others we must go on in patience and in trust, relying upon God to do what is best for his own glory. We cast our bread upon the running waters, trusting that

God will use it for those whose welfare we have at heart.[1]

[1] The conditions for merit "de congruo" are, of course, different from the conditions for merit "de condigno." They are that the act must be morally good, it must be free, and it must be supernatural. Hence (in regard to the last condition), if a man be not in a state of grace his actions, to be meritorious "de congruo," must proceed from an impulse of actual grace. This is one reason why the first grace which a man receives cannot be merited even "de congruo."

CHAPTER VIII

LOSS AND REGAIN

Loss of grace a possibility—Opposition between grace and mortal sin—Restoration of grace and merit—Measure of this restoration.

It was a peculiarity of the teaching of Calvin that he held it to be impossible for a man who had once been justified to fall away. Luther did not go quite so far as this, but he taught that justification can be lost only by the sin of infidelity; in other words, by the loss of that faith which, according to his system, justifies a man.

The teaching of the Catholic Church is that sanctifying grace is lost by every mortal sin. That grace is a thing which can be lost is clear enough. Our Saviour warned us of the danger in which we stand when he said: "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."[1] St Paul gives the warning: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."[2] In the same epistle the great Apostle of the Gentiles expresses the fear which he felt: "I

[1] Matt. xxvi, 41. [2] 1 Cor. x, 12.

chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway."[1] Scripture and Tradition are unanimous on this point of the possibility of losing the grace which we have once acquired.

A little thought will show the essential opposition which exists between sanctifying grace and mortal sin. They are contraries which necessarily exclude each other. On the one hand, he who is in the state of grace is the son of God, a sharer in his nature, an heir to heaven, incorporated in Christ; on the other hand, he who sins mortally deliberately turns himself away from God and seeks his good in something which is opposed to him, so that God is rejected, his enemy enthroned. It is clearly impossible, therefore, that a man should be at one and the same time in the state of grace and in the state of mortal sin. It is for this very reason that such sin is called "mortal," because it deprives the soul of its supernatural life just as a mortal wound deprives the body of its natural life. There is no such opposition, however, between sanctifying grace and venial sin, for the adequate reason that in the case of venial sin a man does not set before himself some other end than God. There is indeed something in-

[1] 1 Cor. ix, 27.

ordinate in his action, but he does not directly turn away from God and prefer some other thing to him.

Had God wished, he could have ordained that grace once lost was lost for ever, as he did in the case of the fallen angels. But in his compassion he has made it possible for us to recover grace after it has been lost. There is no sin, and no combination of sins, for which he refuses forgiveness. Yet it is well that we should remember that of himself the sinner is in a hopeless condition. He is dead, as far as the spiritual life of the soul is concerned, and can do nothing towards his own spiritual resurrection.

The first thing which is necessary, then, is the assistance of Actual Grace,[1] which God never withholds completely from the sinner. If his sorrow is perfect, grace is restored to him even before he approaches the consoling sacrament of Penance; if it remains mere Attrition, the absolution of Christ's minister is required, or some other sacrament which, under the special circumstances of the case, carries with it forgiveness. But these points are explained more fully in other volumes of the series and do not call for special treatment here.[2] It is

[1] See *Actual Grace* in the present series, pp. 21-22.
[2] See Vol. 26, *Sin and Repentance.*

more to our present purpose to call attention to two points which arise more directly in connection with our discussion of sanctifying grace, namely: How much grace is restored to us? And, what happens to the store of Merit which we had acquired before our fall and lost by our sin?

To these questions theologians do not give a uniform answer. St Thomas Aquinas held that the amount of sanctifying grace which a sinner receives when he obtains forgiveness is proportionate to the dispositions in which he returns to God; hence grace after forgiveness may be greater than it was before, it may be less, it may be equal.[1] Other theologians maintain that after repentance and forgiveness the amount of sanctifying grace is always greater than it was before, because the whole of that which was lost is restored and an increase of grace is obtained through the sacrament which has been received and the various acts of the penitent which have merited grace. Whichever of these opinions be true (and one ought to be slow in setting aside the opinion of St Thomas) it is evidently a matter of extreme importance that the sinner should return to God with all the ardour of his soul; then he may hope that in the infinite mercy of God all the grace which

[1] *Summa*, III, lxxxix, 2.

he had lost has been restored to him and he may begin again with renewed energy, hope, and gratitude.

The question of the recovery of Merit is closely akin. That Merit is restored to us when we return to God after a fall, is the teaching of the Church: but it is explained in different ways by theologians. As in the case of the restoration of sanctifying grace, some make it proportionate to the dispositions of the penitent sinner: but others hold that the full measure of lost merit is always restored, with an addition due to present repentance. The point is one concerning which a Catholic is free to hold either opinion. In any case the goodness of God is apparent. Like the father of the Prodigal Son, he is ever ready to receive his erring child and restore him to the inheritance which he had lost.

EPILOGUE

HOPE AND FEAR

THERE can be no doubt that the Catholic teaching on sanctifying grace does much to encourage within us the spirit of hope. He that is mighty has done great things for us. He has made us his children, he has raised us up to a share in his nature, he has set the Beatific Vision as the end towards which we must aspire, and he has given us most wonderful endowments to enable us to reach that end. Well, then, may we hope. Yet in our hope there ought ever to be an element of salutary fear. Why?

First of all because we cannot indulge in that strange security which the Reformers declared to be the one condition for justification. It was part of their system that in order to be justified we must have the unwavering certainty of faith that we *are* justified. This was condemned by the Council of Trent, which lays it down that "just as no pious man ought to entertain a doubt about the mercy of God,

the merits of Christ and the efficacy of the sacraments; so everyone can have uncertainty and fear concerning the possession of grace, when he considers himself and his own infirmity and want of good dispositions; since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which admits of no error, that he has obtained the grace of God."

We cannot, then, have the certainty of faith that we are in grace; but we can have an assurance which is sufficient for all practical purposes. Concerning the precise degree of this assurance there has been considerable discussion amongst theologians, but at any rate we can say without hesitation that a man can have a degree of certainty which excludes all real and prudent doubt. And indeed we are often expected to have such a certainty, as when we receive Holy Communion; at such times we must be able to tell ourselves that we really and truly are in God's grace. To open the door to doubt upon our state of grace when our conscience can discover no serious sin would be to enter upon a life of anguish and stress of mind which God most certainly does not intend. If we are faced by the thought of past sins we must mourn for them and renew our heartfelt sorrow, but we must at the same time put our trust in the goodness of God and in the efficacy of the sacra-

ment of Penance. A condition of morbid fear is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christ.

There is greater ground for fear in regard to the future. I may have reasonable certainty that I am in the grace of God, but do I know that I shall die in that grace? I do not. Far from the mind of a Catholic must be the thought of those who look upon themselves as most certainly amongst the number of the elect, for the Church teaches that apart from a special revelation it is impossible to know which souls God has predestined. When we consider the weakness of our nature and the strength of the enemies of our soul we may well fear lest we fall from grace. Hence our Saviour teaches us to pray that we be saved from temptation. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Be sober and watch," says St Peter, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith."[1] Truly it is with fear and trembling that we must work out our salvation, as St Paul tells us.[2] Nothing which we can do can really merit this "great gift" of final perseverance. We must pray for it, we must hope for it, but we cannot be certain that we shall obtain it.

Yet hope must surely temper the fear which

[1] 1 Pet. v, 8. [2] Phil. ii, 12.

the thought of our uncertainty creates; not the hope of one who is conscious of his own strength, but the hope of one who, knowing his own infirmity, looks up to God in childlike trust. He has been so good to us; he has made such wonderful provision for us; so, whilst we fear our own weakness we are confident of his strength and his love. It is in this spirit that we listen to the words of St Paul which the Church puts before us when she celebrates the mystery of Christ's coming on Christmas night. "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak and exhort."[1]

[1] Tit. ii, 11-15.

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